

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5093

INFO AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SS

SUBJECT: SAHARA: POLISARIO HOLDS THIRD CONGRESS

REF: ALGIERS 2053

1. ON AUGUST 25, POLISARIO BEGAN ITS THIRD CONGRESS. REPRESENTATIVES OF 40 COUNTRIES AND LIBERATION GROUPS, AS WELL AS EQUAL NUMBER OF PRESS DELEGATIONS, ATTENDED GATHERING WHICH WAS NAMED MUSTAFA SIYED EL OUALI CONGRESS. PREDICTABLY, DELEGATIONS INCLUDED REPRESENTATIVES OF ASIAN COMMUNIST STATES, PRO-ALGERIAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES, AND REPRESENTATIVES OF COMMUNIST AND LEFTIST WESTERN EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND PRESSURE GROUPS. (LIST OF DELEGATES BEING FORWARDED INTERESTED ADDRESSEES VIA POUCH.)

2. DESPITE ALGERIAN PRESS CLAIMS, DOES NOT APPEAR CONGRESS TAKING PLACE IN "LIBERATED" TERRITORY. EVEN ALGERIAN JOURNALISTS PUT ESTIMATED DISTANCE TRAVELED FROM TINDOUF TO CONGRESS SITE AT ONLY 20 KILOMETERS, NOT FAR ENOUGH TO REACH SAHARA. OTHER OBSERVERS WERE AMUSED TO NOTE THAT JEEP LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH LEFT TINDOUF IN MORNING TO CARRY THEM TO SITE

PROCEEDED IN EASTERLY DIRECTION INTO RISING SUN.

3. STRIKING POINTS ABOUT CONGRESS SO FAR HAVE BEEN:

A. DOMINATION OF PROCEEDINGS BY LAROUSSI: INTERMIN
POLISARIO SECY GEN MAHFOUD LAROUSSI WAS ONLY POLISARIO
FIGURE OTHER THAN PROVISIONAL NATIONAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT
OULD ZIOU TO BE MENTIONED BY NAME IN ALGERIAN PRESS ACCOUNTS.
SDAR NOTABLES SUCH AS PRIME MINISTER LAMINE AMINE, FOREIGN
MINISTER HAKIM IBRAHIM AND ONCE PROMINENT BABA MISKE WERE
AT GATHERING AND SPOKE WITH FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES, BUT
MEETING GENERALLY SEEMED TO BE LAROUSSI'S SHOW.

B. ALGERIAN PARTICIPATION DISCREET: ONLY ALGERIAN
REPRESENTATIVE TO SPEAK AT MEETING WAS DJELLOUL MALAIKA,
FLN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT CHIEF. FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES
AT CONGRESS WERE STRUCK BY LOW ALGERIAN PROFILE.

C. LOW-LEVEL LIBYAN PARTICIPATION: ALGERIAN PRESS
MADE MUCH OF LIBYAN PARTICIPATION AT MEETING. HOWEVER,
WE UNDERSTAND LARG REPRESENTED ONLY BY ALGIERS EMBASSY
OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR PRESS MATTERS.

4. POLISARIO'S STAFF WORK IN HANDLING FOREIGN DELEGATIONS
APPARENTLY LEFT MUCH TO BE DESIRED. DELEGATES AND JOURNALISTS
WERE BROUGHT TO TINDOUF ON AUGUST 24 AND FOUND THEMSELVES WITH
MUCH TIME ON THEIR HANDS FOLLOWING OPENING CEREMONIES.
SCRAMBLE TO CATCH PLANES BACK TO ALGIERS SAID TO HAVE
BEEN INTENSE AT TIMES.

5. POLISARIO'S ASSERTIONS ON SAHARA SITUATION
AS BOLD IN SITU AS IN PRESS COMMUNIQUE. ONE
FOREIGN DELEGATE, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS TOLD THAT NUMBER
OF REFUGEES NOW STOOD AT 100,000 AND THAT POLISARIO'S
MILITARY STRENGTH WAS 17,000.

6. REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHAT, IF ANYTHING, COMES OF CONGRESS.
AT TIME MAHFOUD LAROUSSI NAMED INTERIM SECY GEN,
POLISARIO ANNOUNCED THAT GATHERING WOULD DECIDE WHO WOULD
OCCUPY POSITION PERMANENTLY, AND ONE PRESS ACCOUNT ASSERTED
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THAT CONGRESS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY ESTABLISH LAROUSSI AS
POLISARIO'S NEW LEADER. OTHER PENDING BUSINESS IS
RATIFICATION OF SDAR CABINET AND OF PROVISIONAL NATIONAL
COUNCIL.PARKER

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